

On Top Of The News



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Saturday, December 5, 2009

INSIDE TODAY
WORLD NEWS

SLAIN STUDENT



This photo released by the Italian Police shows 22-year-old British university student Meredith Kercher, who had enrolled for a year of study in Perugia and was found dead half-naked in a pool of blood in the apartment she shared with an American student Amanda Knox, also in Perugia to study.

Read more on Page B1

SPORTS NEWS

WCUP DRAW



Actress Charlize Theron holds the official match ball 'Jabulani' during the 2010 World Cup draw in Cape Town, South Africa, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009.

Read more on Page B10

Aruba One Happy Island

"You don't know your future, unless you know your past"

ORANJESTAD - Tourism in Aruba started roughly around 1960. This means that the island has had a steady growth in tourism over the last forty-nine years. Much of this tourism is related to aquatic tourism activities, which can range from swimming to scuba diving. In the mid 1980's the island was booming and the water sports industry started to become very popular with scuba diving and snorkeling. The implementation of marine protected areas can be useful to preserve the reef and its inhabitants. A Marine Protected Area (MPA) is often used to cover a wide range of marine areas with some level of restriction to protect living, non-living, cultural, and/or historic resources.

Continued on Page 5



Charlie says Thank You with a donation



ORANJESTAD - Charles Pantano, an island visitor from the USA who also owns

a home on Aruba delivered a generous donation to Imeldahof Children's home.

Charlie received assistance this week from two local residents who did not want to be compensated for their time or effort, and as a form of gratitude Charlie decided to deliver a cash donation to Imeldahof in their name. Charlie was received by Nimia Ormas, the pedagogical coordinator who explained that Imeldahof Children's Home is a private foundation, in Noord, adjacent to the Santa Anna church, capable of taking in up to 52 children. While the home does receive minimal support from the government, the majority of its many needs must be met by donations and Imeldahof is dependent on the community's generosity and willingness to help.

The objective of the children's home, explains Nimia, is to offer temporary shelter and guidance to children who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to remain with their families of origin. In most cases this is only until placement with relatives or foster parents can be arranged.

A few of the reasons for placement of children at Imeldahof are mental or physical abuse, neglect and/or alcohol or drug use by parents, or jail terms imposed on primary caretakers.

Continued on Page 4



new
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The O'Sullivans raise funds for the Clown Doctors



ORANJESTAD -- Diana and John O'Sullivan, Margaret Noonan and Kevin Williams are pictured here with the Clown Doctors Aruba. While on vacation in Aruba at Divi

Resorts with 168 group members the visitors found it in their hearts to collect funds for a local charity. They picked the Clown Doctors Aruba and delivered \$1,500 to foundation

president Peter Balliere during a festive Christmas dinner around the pool at the Mega Divi Resort

"We are the Clown Doctors of Aruba," says Balliere, "some pediatricians call us 'colleagues who cure children without medication'. We are very proud of this, because we wish nothing more than to live in a world with no sick kids. We believe that by creating a fantasy world, through smiles, laughs or a joke, we can put the real world on hold for a while at a time when fear and pain are present. This way we speed up the healing process."

Clown Doctors Aruba is an organization dedicated to visiting ailing children in the hospital, keeping the elderly, living in government institutions, company, and helping teach mentally and physically challenged kids. Pictured here the decorated Mega Divi pool deck, members of the O'Sullivan Group and the grateful Clown Doctors receiving a much-needed donation. □



Tax exchange agreement signed among governments of Saint Lucia, Aruba and the Netherlands

ST. LUCIA - The government of Saint Lucia and the governments of the Netherlands and Aruba have entered into a mutual agreement known as the Tax Information Exchange Agreement, or TIEA. The Tax Information Exchange Agreement, as explained by Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Isaac Anthony, will facilitate the exchange of tax information among the parties with respect to their nationals who are doing business or are employed within each other's jurisdictions. "If Saint Lucia does not sign some 12 outstanding agreements, it is likely to face some very stiff penalties by March next year...Whilst we've actually had for quite sometime a Tax Information Exchange Agreement with the US government, the only thing is that it has yet being ratified," Anthony said. According to a report tabled at the G-20 meeting in April of this year, Saint Lucia is classified as a grey-listed country as it is committed to the internationally agreed standard but has not yet substantially implemented the agreement. However, Mr. Anthony says, Saint Lucia is moving speedily to comply fully and should accomplish at least 12 Tax Information Exchange Agreement signings in the coming weeks—the next one already earmarked with the government of Belgium. □



Sea hunt locates Solihull hero pilot Robert Mansell's body in plane wreckage

THE body of heroic Solihull pilot Robert Mansell has been located in the plane wreckage in the Caribbean Sea, officials have confirmed.

A US ship tracked down the plane using sonar equipment on Tuesday and salvage crews have since been able to establish that the 32-year-old's body is still inside. The news means Mr Mansell should soon be able to be repatriated to the UK and laid to rest by family and friends, following a five-week wait. Mr Mansell, from Knowle, sacrificed himself to save the lives of nine passengers on board his Britten-Norman Islander plane, which he was forced to ditch into the sea close to the island of Bonaire on October 21 after it suffered engine failure.

The impact knocked him unconscious and, despite desperate attempts by passengers to unfasten Mr Mansell's seat belt, the nine-seater plane sank in Dutch territorial waters.

Since then Mr Mansell's father, Roger and sister Claire have been liaising closely with authorities to try and arrange repatriation of his body.

Claire Mansell wrote on a website: "We just want Rob home, so we can make proper arrangements for him. My brother was a soul mate, my little brother, but an evolved, wonderful, sweet human being.

"I have not even begun to process his not being in my life and what it will mean. In my heart, and in my emotions, is where my darling brother will remain."

UK Consul on the island of Curacao, near where the plane crashed, said salvage crews spent much of yesterday painstakingly attaching cables around the wreckage and are hoping to be able to lift the plane from the sea bed today. If the salvage operation goes to plan, Mr Mansell will be brought home to the UK next week.

Friends have been paying tribute to Mr Mansell on a Facebook group entitled "Robert Mansell The Hero". Chris Diggins wrote: "I am proud to say I was your friend...You are truly missed Rob."

Nathan Chan added: "Absolute privilege to know such a fun loving guy, who had time for



everyone."

Meriden MP Caroline Spelman, who has been assisting Mr Mansell's family with repatriation efforts said: "His heroic actions when an engine failed on his plane saved the lives of nine Dutch nationals and it is only right

that he is brought home to rest."

Mr Mansell achieved a degree in aeronautical engineering before achieving his pilot's licence overseas. He was a former pupil of Arden School, Knowle, and Solihull Sixth Form College.

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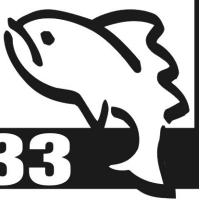
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Charlie says Thank You with a donation



Continued from Front Page as emotionally, offering Imeldahof provides for them safety and structure children physically as well in a supportive, loving

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Children with specific emotional and behavioral challenges receive guidance by specialists and still participate in the general program. Ballet, music, taekwondo, arts and crafts, are offered as part of the curriculum and children are encouraged to attend regular elementary and secondary schools in their own neighborhoods.

Pictured here Charlie touring Imeldahof as he hands over his much needed donation. □

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"You don't know your future, unless you know your past"



Continued from Front Page

But implementation of a marine protected area without enforcement is equal to a "paper park". Compared to other islands in the region Aruba is far behind in terms of marine preservation. Someone said once, "You don't know your future, unless you know your past." February 16th 1942 Aruba got pulled into WW II when the German submariner U-156 fired the first torpedo on the tankers, which were moored in front of the Lago and the Eagle refinery. The first attack, which sank the SS Oranjestad and crippled the Pedernalis, cost the lives of 47 crew members as the SS Oranjestad sank in front of the refinery. The same submarine followed with a second attack in front of Eagle beach where the second refinery installation was located during the 1940's. A group of people organized a committee based on a memorial for the SS Oranjestad and April 2009 the propeller of the SS Oranjestad was stripped and salvaged from the wreck in order to set up a memorial for the victims of this attack. The same group continued in September 2009 with the search of other artifacts from other ships in the

area of Eagle beach and according to information provided, three old anchors were located by this group and divers again made the decision to remove these anchors for various purposes. On Sunday November 22nd 2009 one of these old anchors was lifted out of the water at the Varadero yacht club after being salvaged a few days before of the coast of Aruba in the area of Eagle Beach. The initial idea was to lift all three anchors, but this has proven to be a little more complicated than initially expected. The removal of the anchor out of the water was not easy and the initial attempt to lift the anchor was not successful because of technical difficulties, but after readjusting the rigging the crane operator was able to lift the anchor out of the water, were it was dragged out the rest of the way. There was a crowd of approximately fifty people present, which included parliament members C. Dammers, ex minister of public health and current parliament member C. Wever, Lieutenant Colonel E. Hofma, family members of some of the 47 victims and Mr. De Palm who's oldest brother also lost his life on the SS Oranjestad. Mr. De Palm was finishing his last trip and would have been married three weeks later had it not been for the attack that sunk the SS Oranjestad. Lieutenant Colonel Hofma explained that the anchor is a symbolic presentation and it will be cleaned and installed on the marine base at Savaneta. The idea for a memorial to the SS Oranjestad is noble and should have been implemented years ago by building a memorial. However, removing the propeller from the SS Oranjestad grave site and removing the anchor and salvaging both these objects may not have been necessarily the way

to go, since the SS Oranjestad is unofficially a war grave and the anchor for all intend and purposes belong to the island of Aruba. Due to its fragile state and potential damage to the anchor by exposing it to the air, it might have been better for preservation sake to have kept the anchor under water and not remove it. This anchor and the propeller both have become a integral part of the under water marine environment and over the past six or more decades marine life has attached themselves onto these artifacts and has become home to many marine creatures. The coral reefs around Aruba offer a critical habitat in the marine environment. The coral reefs house nearly 25% of life in the ocean. So the long-

term sustainability of reefs is critical for the survival of marine invertebrates, tropical fish and larger organisms that utilize the reef as a habitat. In Aruba unfortunately there is no marine protection, which should be in place in order to prevent damage, preserve the marine environment and provide protection against any illegal actions. The SS Oranjestad memorial could have been build without having to salvage any artifacts and still it would have been an honorable action and protection of these artifacts could have provided at the same time, including protection of the marine life that these artifacts housed while they were still under water. With the loss of human life on the SS



Oranjestad, its propeller and the raised anchor both could have protected marine life and help the protection and preservation of a fragile and declining reef system. □



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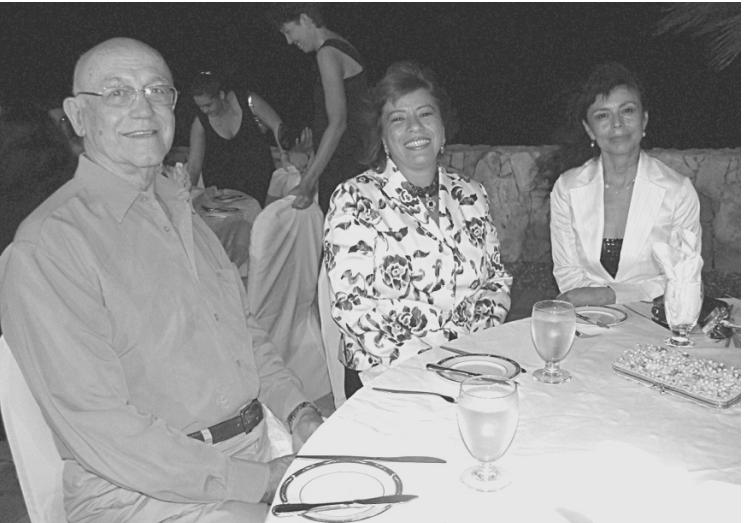
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Tierra del Sol – Ventanas del Mar restaurant hosted the Leysners of famed Leysner & De Cuba Accountants for

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Etty Toppenberg entertained

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Fine & Affordable Dining at Pam Pam Restaurant

Meet Chef Ludwich Samson and his exquisite menu now unveiled!



Nestled in the quiet neighborhood of Boegoeroei, Perle d'Or apartment complex houses Dutch students and vacationers, as well as a cozy garden eatery, Pam Pam Restaurant & Bar. Aiming to attract a more diverse clientele, Pam Pam has recently adopted a more upscale dining concept. In order to pilot this new concept, rising local chef Ludwich Samson was brought on board, and in just two months on the job, he has more than proven his worth.

Laid-back, refreshingly young, and ambitious, Ludwich began his career as a chef by enrolling in Aruba's hospitality and culinary arts school—the best decision he has ever made, he wholeheartedly claims. With ten years in the kitchen and three years as a chef, Ludwich has developed an impressive arsenal of cooking skills. He attributes the majority of his growth as a chef to his years

of working under his mentor, Vittorio Muscarlello, owner of Hostaria Da'Vittorio and one of the most highly respected chefs on Aruba.

In his two months with Pam Pam, Ludwich has entirely remodeled the kitchen to make it more efficient. He has also created a whole new menu featuring particularly unique dishes in order to distinguish Pam Pam from the endless number of restaurants along Aruba's hotel strip. While the menu still offers Dutch snacks and typical Dutch platters like sate to appease the many Dutch interns residing at Perle d'Or, the rest of the menu offers upscale fusion cuisine. Lemon grass and chillies give several seafood dishes a Thai flair; homemade ravioli and beef carpaccio salute Italy; crustacean ceviche adds a Peruvian element; and Indonesian spices add zest to a handful of casual main dishes.

Ludwich also craftily adds little unexpected twists to some classic dishes, elevating the uniqueness of his menu. One of his personal favorites is his porcini-crusted filet mignon served with a thyme red-wine reduction. He also delights in the fact that most diners have a hard time figuring out the sweet and spicy deliciousness of his signature crustacean platter. Other interesting interpretations include lump-crab lollipops, chicken cordon blue unorthodoxly stuffed with ricotta and bacon, and for dessert, tiramisu that promises an untraditional layer of decadent Bailey's chocolate mousse.

Needless to say, Ludwich is creative in the kitchen and works extremely hard, currently putting in 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week; but he insists that this is not what makes a good chef good. "I simply love what



I do for a living," confides Ludwich, and this is what guarantees success in the kitchen and contented diners. Of course, being a chef can be downright stressful, but Ludwich thrives on the rush of adrenaline on busy nights. And when he peers out of the kitchen and sees a restaurant full of people enjoying their meals, he experiences immense satisfaction. For reservations call: 5877710 or 7483848, or visit us at www.pampamaruba.com. □



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Photo by Diane Keijzer



Palm Beach – the Grand Caribbean Ballroom at the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa was the time machine in which Kooyman's anniversary party guests went back in time, way back in time to 1939 when it all started and Kooyman B.V. a home improvement store opened on the island. The décor of the party evoked the jazz era, as the Radisson's culinary and banquet team did their magic entertaining more than 200 people.

Kooyman B.V. has been operating in the Caribbean for 70 years, as a business focusing on building materials and hardware. It operated as Antil N.V. on Aruba, since the mid-60s but was always the subsidiary of Kooyman B.V. In 2004 Kooyman B.V. remodeled and renovated its store bringing the Aruban community a bigger and better Antil, now Kooyman Aruba. Fair prices, a loyalty program and a wider assortment of products, makes Kooyman Aruba the source for hardware, building materials and many home improvement products.



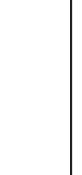
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ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fishermen of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad.

Driftwood owner Herby Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words



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Low carb eaters will have all their expectations surpassed with a tempting carnivorous selection of umpteen cuts of sizzling beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge.

The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers up a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but Texas de Brazil's version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more. The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, Texas de Brazil will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

Restaurant
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Monday - Sat 6 pm - 11
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Motion in Dutch Parliament against Brooks Tower Accord

THE HAGUE--A motion was presented in the Dutch Parliament's Second Chamber early Thursday urging the Dutch Government to speak to the Antillean Central Government about the Brooks Tower Accord (BTA) and the effects the process of legalising undocumented persons on the islands could have on the Netherlands.

The motion, presented by the largest governing party Christian Democratic Party CDA and supported by Democrats D66, Labour Party PvdA, Socialist Party (SP), liberal democratic VVD party, Christian Union (CU) and the reformed SGP party at the end of the debate on the 2010 budget for Kingdom Relations, emphasised that illegality had to be "severely" combated and should not be "rewarded" with a residence permit.

The motion requested the Dutch Government to engage in talks with the Central and Island Governments to intensify the combating of illegal residence and the expulsion of illegal persons, to control the BTA's execution and the consequences of these legalising operations for the Netherlands.

CDA, VVD, PvdA, SGP and the Party for Freedom PVV were very critical of the BTA. Members of Parliament of these parties all pointed out the danger in granting more than 90,000 undocumented persons on the islands temporary residence permits. These persons could request Dutch passports after a few years, which would make it possible for them to travel to the Netherlands.

Not possible
Dutch State Secretary

for Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten stressed that under the BTA, an undocumented persons who complied with all conditions would only receive a temporary permit that would be valid for the island on which he or she was living. "Admittance to the Netherlands will not be possible," she assured Parliament.

She said she would bring up the BTA issue at the Political Steering Group (PSG) meeting in St. Maarten next week Wednesday. She said she hoped to come to an agreement to "minimise" the effects of the BTA operation on the movement of persons within the Kingdom.

Bijleveld-Schouten will arrive in St. Maarten Tuesday morning for preliminary talks with the islands, in anticipation of the main meeting on Wednesday. She will travel back to the Netherlands on Thursday.

During the debate, Bijleveld-Schouten tried to soothe concerns of Members of Parliament about reports that Aruba also wanted to introduce an operation on that island similar to the BTA. She said there too it wouldn't be possible for persons with temporary residence permits to travel to the Netherlands. She said she didn't have figures on the number of undocumented persons in Aruba.

Member of Parliament (MP) Hero Brinkman (PVV) said he was against any form of legalisation of undocumented persons on the islands. Illegal persons needed to be sent back to their countries of origin, he said. He too presented a motion, but his was aimed at stopping any person with a temporary residence permit from travelling to

the Netherlands. "Not one illegal person should enter this country," he insisted. Brinkman called the BTA operation a "general pardon," also because the persons concerned could obtain extension of their permits, making it possible for them to request a Dutch passport after three to five years.

Closing borders

Brinkman's motion, which he presented individually, without support of the other parties, stated that the Netherlands Antilles should be forced to forego the implementation of the BTA and to never allow the persons in question to obtain Dutch passports. If these persons were ever to receive passports, he suggested closing the Dutch borders to Antilleans in general.

He said a list should be kept in the Netherlands with the names of persons granted temporary permits under the BTA.

MP Johan Remkes (VVD) supported the PVV in that he too said it should be made impossible for persons who acquired Dutch passports via the BTA operation to enter the Netherlands. "The chance of travelling on to the Netherlands has to be zero," he insisted, and requested that the State Secretary guarantee this.

MP Kees van der Staaif (SGP) agreed with his colleagues Remkes and Brinkman that undocumented persons with temporary permits should not be allowed to travel to the Netherlands. He said a general pardon was "unacceptable."

Punish employers

MP John Leerdam (PvdA) was not that extreme, but he urged Bijleveld-Schouten to make sure that punitive action would be taken

against employers who continued to employ illegal persons. He asked whether the islands had enough capacity to arrest and repatriate illegal residents. Colleague Bas Jan van Bochove (CDA), the initiative-taker of the generally-supported motion, posed a series of questions on the BTA and the announced similar operation in Aruba. He said it couldn't be ruled out that persons with temporary permits would eventually move to the Netherlands. He also expressed concern that the BES islands Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba would be used as "stepping stones" for undocumented persons

to come to the Netherlands. The Second Chamber will vote on the CDA motion this Tuesday. Considering that six parties co-signed the motion, it is certain that it will pass. Twelve other motions were presented during the budget-handling meeting Wednesday night and early Thursday morning. One of the motions, presented by SP, dealt with the case of a former St. Maarten civil servant who had enjoyed a "royal" salary plus extras while working in the Netherlands. MP Ronald van Raak requested that the Dutch Government provide an overview of similar allowances for former Antillean politicians. □

Moses-Burton honoured for work in AIDS prevention

PHILIPSBURG--St. Maarten's HIV/AIDS Programme Manager Suzette Moses-Burton has received the Juanita Altenberg Award for Excellence from the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC).

The announcement was made on World AIDS Day by Dr. Robert Carr, Executive Director of CVC.

Dr. Carr said Moses-Burton stood out in the region as a defender of the human rights of persons living with HIV and AIDS. In a release he said she has worked regionally to help set up national groups and to build the capacity of members of people living with HIV community.

Additionally she has done extensive work with members of other populations most at risk for HIV, the release further quoted Dr. Carr as saying.

The release also mentioned that Moses-Burton is well respected on the international scene as an activist who is unapologetic in making her demands on behalf of the communities she serves, as she has lobbied with many different groups, such as Caribbean Parliamentarians, international AIDS programmes managers and funders.

Juanita Altenberg, after whom the award is named, is described as a pioneer in the Caribbean region in HIV advocacy, care, treatment and prevention for communities both hard hit by the HIV epidemic and by social stigma and exclusion.

In addition to her serving as the Executive Director of Maxi Linder, one of the region's most respected leaders in services to most vulnerable populations especially sex workers, Altenberg also served as the Founding Co-Chair of the Board of the CVC which now names this award in her honour in order to celebrate her work.

Moses-Burton said the award is not just an honour, but a humbling experience to have the work that she does acknowledged by her peers in the fight against HIV in the region.

"There are others in my opinion far more deserving of this award; however I thank CVC and its members for this recognition," she said. □

Kingdom partners: 'One likes brown beans, the other herring'

THE HAGUE--People in the Dutch Kingdom differ a great deal where it comes to culture and other social aspects. In the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, people like to eat brown beans and rice, while those living on the European side would rather eat herring. However, there are also aspects that bind people in the Kingdom, which makes it worth continuing together, was the conclusion at Wednesday's symposium "Future of the Kingdom, the joint value of the Kingdom." "The Antillean comes to the table with a plate with brown beans and rice. The Dutch person has a herring on the plate. The Antillean says I don't

like herring, I prefer my beans and rice. The Dutchman says I don't like brown beans and rice, I am eating my herring." It was a descriptive way of a member of the audience at the symposium to say that partners in the Kingdom don't understand each other. "Bottom line," said this member of the audience, "if I know you love me, I'll listen to you. If you don't love me, I'm not listening." The audience and panellists at the symposium agreed that relations in the Kingdom required more than listening and that inter-human contact was key in safeguarding the values and interests of the

Kingdom.

It was also agreed that improvement of know-how, mostly through education in and about the Kingdom, played a major role. Some said that establishment of bodies on Kingdom and international levels, like a Kingdom Parliament or a Kingdom Commissioner of Human Rights, could help safeguard joint values in the Kingdom. Others maintained that there was a role for the Dutch Royal Family.

Panellist attorney-at-law Leo Spigt suggested a bottom-up instead of the current top-down approach to talk to each other and solve issues at Kingdom level. "We have to get away from the top-down approach whereby the Netherlands says this is the problem and that is how we solve it, with a carrot in one hand and a stick in the other," said Spigt, who founded law offices both in the Netherlands and in the Netherlands Antilles.

The historic bond between partners in the Kingdom "with its good and bad sides" is the most evident value, said panellist former Antillean Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Susy Camelia-Römer. The islands have an emotional bond with the Netherlands, a relationship that affects everyday life, she said.

Considering this intimate relationship, the island was "deeply indignant" when The Hague launched "another proposal" that affected Dutch citizenship and the rights of residents of the islands with Dutch nationality to live, work and study in the Netherlands, said Camelia-Römer. She was obviously referring to the Kingdom law proposal regulating the movement of persons (Rijkswet Personenverkeer).

According to Camelia-Römer, the role of the Kingdom or the Netherlands should be limited to the guarantee function as stated in Article 43 of the Charter, and should not be influenced by Dutch politics. She pointed out that the islands had democratically elected governments. Camelia-Römer said she was in favour of independence for

Curaçao in a commonwealth construction. She said partners in the Kingdom needed to decide whether they wanted to continue with each other. To realise a better balanced relationship between partners in the Kingdom, panellist Gerrit-Jan van Oven, former Public Prosecutor in the Netherlands Antilles and currently judge in The Hague, proposed a Kingdom Parliament. "Control of the Kingdom Government is not possible without a Kingdom Parliament," he said. Van Oven named the Royal Family, human rights and democracy and mutual respect as joint values in the Kingdom.

Fellow panellist and University of Aruba dean Lydia Emerencia said without true understanding of the dynamics of the changes it would be impossible to cooperate with each other in the Kingdom. She said there was diversity in the Kingdom and so partners should not think in uniform terms. The time factor should be taken into consideration – time to talk, listen to each and find common solutions. Emerencia said the Kingdom partners didn't have a joint history, but merely shared a part of history.

Professor Piet Hein van Kempen of Radboud University in Nijmegen, specialised in human rights, presented his solution for the conflicts in the Kingdom: a Kingdom Commissioner for Human Rights. The independent, objective Commissioner would see to it that the rights of every human being in the Kingdom were respected and implemented. The Commissioner should have no political links and it would not be a government organ, but a neutral institution.

Several persons in the audience didn't think a Commissioner was a good idea for various reasons: it wouldn't work, there are already objective, independent organs like the Council of State and the governors, and the to-be-established Council for Supervision of Maintenance of Law and Order (Raad voor de Rechtshandhaving) would have more or less the same

authority in the judicial area. The audience was asked to vote on two positions by holding up a green card if they agreed and a red card if they disagreed. The first one was: "Are there sufficient values and interests to secure the existence of the Kingdom for a longer time?" The second one read: "The love for the Kingdom is only experienced in the Caribbean." The audience voted 50-50 for the second position, while the majority voted green on the first position.

Persons in the audience actively participated in the debate. Many posed critical questions and at times the discussion even became emotional.

They addressed matters like education, which was important so that children on the islands would have a better future, the need to reduce the distance between politics and citizens, teaching Dutch children the history of the Kingdom, the general lack of respect and understanding in the Kingdom, and getting rid of the Dutch thinking of "who pays, decides."

The audience did exactly what Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten, whose BZK ministry had organised the Kingdom symposium, had asked them to do: don't hold back, speak out. She threw out rather controversial statements to the public. She asked if the presupposition that the Kingdom partners would maintain a relationship was realistic and said that more autonomy wasn't the same as no more cooperation.

Bijleveld-Schouten said she didn't believe that a good relationship always had to be balanced. "It is not of great importance that people in all parts of the Kingdom have equal knowledge about each other, or that everyone feels equally bound," she said. Solidarity could only be measured in terms of practical cooperation or joint facilities. "If these diminish in the future or lose their significance, and only symbols of solidarity remain, we move from relationship to folklore," she said. □

Antilles to appoint eight 'dismantling consultants'

WILLEMSTAD--The Netherlands Antilles is on the verge of appointing eight dismantling consultants. They will be given the task of dismantling the eight ministries of the country. Home and Constitutional Affairs Minister Roland Duncan (National Alliance) brought this up during the debate on the 2010 budget in the Antillean Parliament. Each consultant will be responsible for the dismantling of one ministry. The minister further indicated that there already had been a tender to come up with the required manpower. The quotations already have been received, but a decision remains forthcoming on who will be charged with this task. The consultant expenditures amount to 95,000 guilders per ministry.

The Netherlands will come up with this amount through development financing entity USONA.

The dismantling consultants will be the counterparts at country level of the "quartermasters" at island level. Quartermasters are consultants deployed to establish the new ministries of the future countries Curaçao and St. Maarten at island level. Duncan had to answer many questions from Members of Parliament regarding the commencement day for the transfer of tasks and personnel from the country Netherlands Antilles to the various Island Territories. He announced that he could not answer such as yet, as it was up to the islands to indicate when they were ready for the transfer.

However, he was able to state the Central Government officials would be "placed at the disposal" of the Island Territories by the Netherlands Antilles.

A song-and-dance occurred when Duncan gave a CD to Parliament Chairman Pedro Atacho (PAR) that contained information on the dismantling process. The minister requested Parliament to be cautious with respect to the personal information, because the CD contained confidential data on officials, among others.

This led to a discussion between Duncan, Atacho and the MAN faction members Dwigno Puriel and Eunice Eisdien on how to deal with the information on the CD, because it contained confidential data as well as information to be used publicly.

At a certain point Duncan became so fed up with the discussion that he took back the CD and proceeded with the verbal explanation on the questions. □

BUSINESS

Aruba TODAY

GM Chair urges risk taking, names new executives



By TOM KRISHER
and DEE-ANN DURBIN,
AP Auto Writers

DETROIT – General Motors Co. Chairman Ed Whitacre Jr. urged the troubled automaker's employees to forget their old bureaucratic culture, telling them Friday not to fear being fired for taking risks.

Whitacre, who also announced key management changes, wants to speed up the automaker's shift to an entrepreneurial culture where decisions are made quickly. "We want you to step up. We don't want any bureaucracy," Whitacre told employees, strolling back and forth across a stage at the company's headquarters here. "We're not going to make it if you won't take a risk," he told the audience of 800.

In a 45-minute presentation that was broadcast to employees on internal television networks and over the Internet, Whitacre also unveiled a mission statement to design, build and sell the world's best vehicles.

Whitacre, who peppered his address with self-deprecating humor, named Vice Chairman Bob Lutz, who has long advocated for a more risk-taking culture, as his adviser for product development.

Whitacre also said he is recombining sales and marketing, placing them

under Susan Docherty. She became head of sales when former CEO Fritz Henderson separated the roles of sales and marketing. Henderson left the company earlier this week.

Lutz, 77, who had been in charge of marketing, will help Whitacre learn about the business, he said.

In another key move, the chairman, who joined GM in June, promoted engineering chief Mark Reuss to run North American operations. Reuss recently was named head of engineering, and before that ran the company's Holden operations in Australia.

GM board member Stephen Girsky, a former auto analyst with Morgan Stanley, also will be an adviser to Whitacre. Girsky worked briefly as an analyst in the treasurer's office at GM in the late 1980s, and also was an adviser to former CEO Rick Wagoner in 2005 and 2006.

During his speech, Whitacre set a tone of humility and encouraged employees to give him ideas.

"I'm on the 39th floor of the RenCen. You're all welcome," he said, referring to GM's headquarters. He also said he would be roving around GM's operations, drawing laughter. Recently, former auto task force leader Stephen Rattner criticized GM executives for using a private elevator that took them directly to their offices, bypassing employees. When one employee asked Whitacre if he would consider reviving the Pontiac or Hummer brands, Whitacre shrugged.

"I'd say the probability is low. But I don't know. I'm new to this business," he said.

He was also effusive with his praise, calling GM "intellectually better" than its rivals. □

Stocks edge higher as employers cut fewer jobs



Specialist Donald Hemptle, foreground center, and colleagues watch monitors at the post that trades Bank of America on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Friday, Dec. 4, 2009. Stocks surged in early trading after the government said the nation's jobless rate dropped to 10 percent in November and far fewer jobs were lost.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

By TIM PARADIS
and IEVA M. AUGSTUMS,
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK – Stocks gave up some of their early gains as investors, seeing a brighter employment picture as a sign of economic strength, worry about higher interest rates. Major stock indexes edged higher Friday as news that employers cut fewer jobs in November brought expectations that the Federal Reserve could hike rates or remove other supports from the economy sooner than expected.

Treasurys and gold fell as demand for safe-haven investments eased.

The prospects of increased rates lifted the dollar. That, in turn, ate into an early surge in stocks and commodities including oil.

The Labor Department said the economy shed 11,000 jobs last month, the smallest monthly loss since December 2007. That's much better than the 130,000 losses Wall Street economists expected and also an improvement from the 111,000 cuts in October.

10,394.11. In early trading, the Dow reached a new trading high for the year of 10,516.70.

The broader Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 5.40, or 0.5 percent, to 1,105.32, after setting a 2009 high of 1,119.13.

The Nasdaq composite index rose 16.21, or 0.8 percent, to 2,189.35, reaching a high for the year of 2,214.39.

The jobs report weighed on bond prices, pushing yields higher. The benchmark 10-year Treasury note fell about a point, pushing its yield up to 3.49 percent from 3.38 percent late Thursday. The yield on the three-month T-bill rose to 0.05 percent from 0.04 percent.

Arise in the dollar held back an advance on the stock market. For months, stocks have fallen when the dollar strengthens because a rising greenback makes commodities more expensive for foreign buyers and can eat into the profits U.S. companies collect from overseas.

The ICE Futures U.S. dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of foreign currencies, rose 1 percent.

Charlie Smith, chief investment officer at Fort Pitt Capital in Pittsburgh, said some traders are worrying that the Fed will try to wean big banks from low-cost loans and disrupt trades that have been profitable this year. He contends that spoiling the easy trades could prompt banks to boost lending as they look for more places to put their money.

"It forces the bankers to be bankers instead of just sort of taking the free money from the Fed and buying Treasurys with it," Smith said. □

Unexpected drop in jobless rate sparks optimism

By CHRISTOPHER S.

RUGABER,

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — A surprising drop in the unemployment rate and far fewer job losses last month raised hopes Friday for a sustained economic recovery.

The rate unexpectedly fell to 10 percent, from 10.2 percent in October, as employers cut the fewest number of jobs since the recession began. The government also said 159,000 fewer jobs were lost in September and October than first reported.

If part-time workers who want full time jobs and laid-off workers who have given up looking for jobs are included, the so-called underemployment rate also fell, to 17.2 percent from 17.5 percent in October.

The better-than-expected figures provided a rare dose of good news for a labor market that's lost 7.2 million jobs in two years. The unemployment rate hadn't fallen since July. Still, the respite may be temporary.

Job creation is expected to remain far too weak in coming months to absorb the 15.4 million unemployed people who are seeking work — and the 11.5 million others who are underemployed. As more people begin seeking work, the jobless rate is likely to resume rising.

The report offered evidence of how hard it remains to find a job: The number of people unemployed for at least six months rose last month to 5.9 million. And the average length of unemployment has risen to more than 28 weeks, the longest on records dating to 1948.

Even counting last month's decline, the unemployment rate has more than doubled since the recession began in December 2007, when it stood at 4.9 percent. And the underemployment rate has jumped to 17.2 percent from 8.7 percent.

"We will need very substantial job growth to get unemployment lower, especially when the labor force ... starts growing again," said Lawrence Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute, a liberal think tank.

Still, economists and investors drew hope from the Labor Department report. It said the economy shed 11,000 jobs last month — a sharp improvement from October's revised total of 111,000. And it was much better than the 130,000 Wall Street economists had expected.

The average work week also rose to 33.2 hours, from a record low of 33 hours, along with average earnings. Economists expect

employers will increase hours for their current workers before hiring new ones.

"We've still got a long way to go, but the good news in this report provides important positive momentum," said Carl Riccadonna, senior U.S. economist at Deutsche Bank. President Barack Obama, speaking in Allentown, Pa., applauded the drop in job losses and put finishing touches on a proposal he'll unveil next week to try to stimulate business hiring. He will endorse sending new money to state and local governments to stem their layoffs and expanding a program that gives people cash incentives to fix up homes with energy-saving materials, a senior administration official said.

Obama will also endorse new tax breaks for small businesses that hire workers, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the package, and Obama's speech, are still being crafted.

The stock market initially jumped in response to the jobs report, before giving up all its gains later in the day. In mid-afternoon trading, the Dow Jones industrial average was down about 35 points. Broader stock averages were mixed.

The increase in hours worked means employees are earning more income, Riccadonna said, which could help boost consumer spending and enable Americans to pay down more debt.

Average weekly earnings jumped \$4.08 to \$622.17, the report said. Temporary help services added 52,000 jobs, the fourth straight increase. That's also positive news, because companies are likely to hire temporary workers before adding permanent ones. Total employment usually starts to increase between three and six months after temporary employment, Riccadonna said.

The economy has now lost jobs for 23 straight months. But the small decline in November indicates the nation could begin generating jobs soon. Many economists think it will happen in the first quarter of next year.

David Rosenberg, chief economist for Canadian wealth management firm Gluskin Sheff, said the 7 point difference between the jobless rate and underemployment rate is almost double the usual gap. That's an indication of how many more people are likely to be looking for work in coming months.

Another worrisome sign: The National Federation of Independent Business said

Thursday that a monthly survey of its small business members showed that more companies plan to reduce employment in the next three months than plan to add jobs.

And a survey by outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas Thursday found a sharp drop in the number of companies planning to hire workers in November, compared with the previous month.

The services sector gained 58,000 jobs last month, while manufacturing and construction shed 68,000 positions. Education and health services added 40,000 jobs, and government employment rose 7,000.

The unemployment rate fell because the number of jobless Americans dropped by 325,000 to 15.4 million. The jobless rate is calculated from a survey of households. The number of jobs lost or gained, by contrast, is calculated from a separate survey of business and government establishments. The two surveys can sometimes vary.

The unemployment rate also dropped because fewer people are looking for work. The size of the labor force, which includes the employed and those actively searching for jobs, has fallen by 1.2 million in the past six months. That indicates more of the unemployed are giving up on looking for work.

The participation rate, or the percentage of the population employed or looking for work, fell to 65 percent, the lowest since the recession began. Once laid-off people stop hunting for jobs, they are no longer counted in the unemployment rate.

Even as layoffs are easing, the slow pace of hiring is causing headaches for political leaders. The employment report comes a day after President Barack Obama hosted a "jobs summit" at the White House, where he told economists, business executives and union leaders that he is "open to every demonstrably good idea" to create jobs.

Democrats in Congress are considering legislation that would extend jobless benefits for those who have run out and help the unemployed pay for health care coverage. Those measures could cost up to \$100 billion.

The unemployment rate has dropped recently in some other countries as the global economy recovers. Canada said Friday that its economy added 79,000 jobs last month, pushing down its jobless rate to 8.5 percent from 8.6 percent. Canada hasn't experienced the type of housing



Tony Thomas of West Palm Beach fills out paperwork at a job fair at Workforce Alliance in West Palm Beach, Florida in this November 6, 2009 file photo. U.S. employers cut only 11,000 jobs last month, the best showing in nearly two years, and the jobless rate edged down to 10 percent, a strong suggestion the jobs market was edging towards health, according to a U.S. Labor Department report issued on December 4, 2009. Picture taken November 6, 2009.

REUTERS/Joe Skipper/Files

meltdown and financial crisis that slammed the U.S. economy last year.

On Tuesday, Germany said its unemployment rate fell to 7.6 percent in November from 7.7 percent, as the country's exports

have rebounded. Germany subsidizes the pay of workers whose hours are cut, as a way to help companies avoid layoffs. That has kept its unemployment rate lower throughout the global downturn. □



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Brady picks winning door with 'Let's Make a Deal'

LOS ANGELES – Wayne Brady is savoring a big year, with doors opening to him at Carnegie Hall, the White House and, in multiples, on "Let's Make a Deal."

The actor-singer-funnyman debuted in October as host of a revival of Monty Hall's classic game show, riding herd on eager contestants choosing between cash and the chance of prizes tucked, famously, behind door number one, two or three.

The game show gig and Brady's sold-out Carnegie Hall debut in New York followed his White House performance as part of a tribute to Stevie Wonder last February.

Carnegie was "a wonderful milestone in my life," said Brady, who was backed by the New York Pops orchestra for a salute to Sammy Davis Jr. and Sam Cooke. "To be able to do that and to launch what we hope is a successful game show, a bit of iconic American TV, that's not a bad year."

Hall, a consultant on the new "Deal" produced by FremantleMedia North America, said a number of contenders were considered and rejected for host of the Las Vegas-based daytime show that airs on CBS (check local listings) from the Tropicana hotel-casino. "We needed someone who could ad lib, be charming, work with contestants and run the show," Hall said. He'd tried to woo Brady before, without success, but this time prevailed.

Brady, who exudes earnest confidence along with that easy charm, says "Deal" represents another step in building a career as an all-around entertainer

in the mold of a Davis or Billy Crystal or John Leguizamo.

"I'm an actor first and foremost, who happens to do improv. I've also done sitcoms, I've done stage," he said, with TV credits including his 2002-04 talk show and guest shots on "30 Rock," "Girlfriends" and other series. The Grammy-nominated singer is working on two new CDs, including one he calls a "big band-soul record."

The ultimate goal, he said, is an epitaph in the very distant future that reads, "This guy did just about everything you could do in the entertainment business and was good at it all" — similar to what's inscribed at Davis' grave in Forest Lawn cemetery in Glendale: "The Entertainer: He Did It All."

Brady, 37, demonstrated his quick wit on Drew Carey's "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" and a knack for running a quiz show on "Don't Forget the Lyrics!" And he said he doesn't feel the need to separate himself on "Deal" from Hall and his reign.

"By virtue of me being myself, it's already different. It's the host in the middle of an audience and there's no script, so it's just me," he said. "You can't be Monty Hall; he had his own very dry thing and a great bearing about him that made you trust him."

"All I can do is make the contestants feel good and be affable and have a good time," said Brady, noting parallels between hosting and doing improv. "That's what this show's about. It's about contestants and the game. It's not about a host trying to hog the spotlight." □



In this publicity image released by CBS, game show host Wayne Brady is shown on the set of, 'Let's Make A Deal,' in Las Vegas, Nev.

(AP Photo/CBS, Monty Brinton)

By LYNN ELBER,
AP Television Writer

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The power of Soy



The soybean (U.S.) or soya bean (UK) (commonly misspelled "Soyabean") (*Glycine max*) is a species of legume native to East Asia. The plant is classed as a plant rather than a pulse. It is an annual plant that has been used in China for 5,000 years to primarily add nitrogen into the soil as part of crop rotation. The plant is sometimes referred to as greater bean (China) or edamame (Japan), though the latter is more commonly used in English when referring to a specific dish. In Vietnam, the plant is called đậu týõng or đậu nành.

The English word "soy" is derived from the Japanese pronunciation of (shôyu), the Japanese word for Soya sauce; soya comes from the Dutch adaptation of the same word.

Fat-free(defatted) soybean meal is a primary, relatively low-cost, source of protein for animal feeds or rations; soy vegetable oil is another valuable product of processing the soybean crop. Soybean products such as TVP (textured vegetable protein), for example, are important ingredients in many meat and dairy analogues. Soybeans are also used to make soy sauce, and the oil is used in many industrial applications. The main



Tofu is displayed in a supermarket in Santa Monica, California October 3, 2007.

REUTERS/Lucy Nicholson

Soy may lessen risk of endometrial, ovarian cancers

By Joene Hendry

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) – Women who eat more soy-based foods than average may have less risk for certain cancers in the ovaries and the lining of the uterus, according to the combined findings of a few studies.

The uterine lining cancers - also known as endometrial cancer - and the ovarian cancer are all known to be affected by hormones such as estrogen, which are mimicked by compounds in soy. While some soy compounds that act like estrogen are linked to a higher rate of breast cancer, studies have suggested the opposite for endometrial and ovarian cancer.

The new report, in BJOG, An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, hints that odds of developing these cancers may be 40 percent lower among women who eat the highest amounts of soy-based foods.

One of the authors of the new analysis, Dr. Kwon Myung, at the National Cancer Center in Goyang, Korea, told Reuters Health that the data is too preliminary to draw any firm conclusions.

The National Cancer Institute estimates that more than 21,000 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer and more than 14,000 women will die of it in 2009. About 42,000 women will be diagnosed with endometrial cancer, according to the Institute, and about 8,000 will die of it.

The seven studies Myung's team reviewed - they rejected others that were of poorer quality -- included more than 169,000 women, of whom 3,516 had one of the two cancers. Most of the studies evaluated the intake of soy or soy components from foods such as legumes, soy curd, or soy protein.

Still, Myung said confirmation of the findings would require "a higher level of evidence," and scientists have yet to determine the optimal amount of soy-based foods. □

producers of soy are the United States, Brazil, Argentina, China and India. The beans contain significant amounts of phytic acid, alpha-Linolenic acid, and the isoflavones genistein and daidzein.

Soy varies in growth, habit, and height. It may grow not higher than 20 cm (7.8 inches), or grow up to 2 meters (6.5 feet) high.

The pods, stems, and leaves are covered with fine brown or gray hairs. The leaves are trifoliate,

having 3 to 4 leaflets per leaf, and the leaflets are 6–15 cm (2–6 inches) long and 2–7 cm (1–3 inches) broad. The leaves fall before the seeds are mature. The inconspicuous, self-fertile flowers are borne in the axil of the leaf and are white, pink or purple.

The fruit is a hairy pod that grows in clusters of 3–5, each pod is 3–8 cm long (1–3 inches) and usually contains 2–4 (rarely more) seeds 5–11 mm in diameter.



Soybeans occur in various sizes, and in many hull or seed coat colors, including black, brown, blue, yellow, green and mottled. The hull of the mature bean is hard, water resistant, and protects the cotyledon and hypocotyl (or "germ") from damage. If the seed coat is cracked, the seed will not germinate. The scar, visible on the seed coat, is called the hilum (colors include black, brown, buff, gray and yellow) and at one end of the hilum is the micropyle, or small opening in the seed coat which can allow the absorption of water for sprouting.

Remarkably, seeds such as soybeans containing very high levels of protein can undergo desiccation yet survive and revive after water absorption. A. Carl Leopold, son of Aldo Leopold, began studying this capability at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research at Cornell University in the mid 1980s. He found soybeans and corn to have a range of soluble carbohydrates protecting the seed's cell viability.^[4] Patents were awarded to him in the early 1990s on techniques for protecting "biological membranes" and proteins in the dry state. Compare to tardigrades.

Together, oil and protein content account for about 60%



For human consumption, soybeans must be cooked with "wet" heat in order to destroy the trypsin inhibitors (serine protease inhibitors). It is not advisable to eat raw soybeans. Soybeans are considered by many agencies to be a source of complete protein. □





On Top Of The News

Email: news@arubatoday.com

Saturday, December 5, 2009



U.S. soldiers patrol in the center of Kabul, Afghanistan on Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009. U.S. President Barack Obama, in a defining moment of his presidency, announced Tuesday he would deepen the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, sending 30,000 more troops to fight the Taliban despite Americans' growing pessimism about the war.

Associated Press

U.S. Marines launch offensive in Afghanistan

ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU

Associated Press Writer

KABUL (AP) — U.S. Marines swooped down behind Taliban lines in helicopters and Osprey aircraft Friday in the first offensive since President Barack Obama announced an American troop surge.

About 1,000 Marines and 150 Afghan troops were taking part in "Operation Cobra's Anger" in a bid to disrupt Taliban supply and communications lines in the Now Zad Valley of Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, the scene of heavy fighting last summer, according to Marine spokesman Maj. William Pelletier. Hundreds of troops from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines and the Marine reconnaissance unit Task Force Raider dropped by helicopters and MV-22 Osprey aircraft in the northern end of the valley while a second, larger Marine force pushed northward from the main Marine base in the town of Now Zad, Pelletier said.

A U.S. military official in Washington said it was the first use of Ospreys, aircraft that combine features of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, in an offensive involving units larger than platoons.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to detail the operation, said that Ospreys have previously been used for intelligence and patrol operations.

Combat engineers used armored steamrollers and explosives to force a corridor through Taliban minefields — known as "IED Alley" because of the huge number of roadside bombs, known as improvised explosive devices, and land mines, Pelletier said.

Roadside bombs and mines have become the biggest killer of American troops in Afghanistan.

There were no reports of U.S. or Afghan government casualties. The spokesman for the Afghan governor of Helmand province, Daood Ahmadi, said at least four Taliban fighters had been killed and their bodies recovered.

He said more than 300 mines and roadside bombs had been located in the first day of the operation.

Pelletier said insurgents were caught off guard by the early morning air assault.

"Right now, the enemy is confused and disorganized," Pelletier said by telephone from Camp Leatherneck, the main Marine base in Helmand. "They're fighting, but not too effectively."

The offensive began three days after Obama announced that he was sending 30,000 reinforcements to Afghanistan to help turn the tide against the Taliban and train Afghan security forces to take responsibility for defending against the militants.

Continued on Page B6

Obama: Jobs plan will 'jump-start' hiring



Job recruiters wait at a booth at a holiday job fair at Skyline College in San Bruno, Calif., Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2009. The number of newly laid-off workers filing claims for unemployment benefits last week fell to the lowest level in 10 months, evidence that job cuts are easing as the economy slowly heals.

Associated Press

ANDREW TAYLOR

PHILIP ELLIOTT

Associated Press Writers

ALLEN TOWNS, Pennsylvania (AP) — Even as he trumpeted a slowdown in the country's job losses Friday, President Barack Obama put finishing touches on a proposal he'll unveil next week to "jump-start" business hiring across America.

Continued on Page B4



U.S. murder suspect Amanda Knox turns around during a final hearing at the court in Perugia, Italy, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009. An Italian jury has begun deliberations in the yearlong trial of American student Knox, who is charged with murdering her British roommate Meredith Kercher in 2007 with her former boyfriend Italian murder suspect Raffaele Sollecito. A verdict is expected later today.

Associated Press

Knox convicted, sentenced to 26 years in Italy

Read Page B8

Kremlin agrees with U.S. to maintain expiring pact



U.S. President Barack Obama speaks with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev during their meeting on the sidelines of the APEC summit in Singapore, Sunday, Nov. 15, 2009.

Associated Press

DESMOND BUTLER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and Russia said Friday that they had agreed to maintain the provisions of a major nuclear arms control treaty hours before it is set to expire.

In a joint statement by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. counterpart Barack

Obama, the two sides pledged to continue to work together "in the spirit" of the expiring 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

Meanwhile, U.S. and Russian negotiators are working intensively to reach a deal for a successor treaty.

In Friday's statement, the two sides also express their "firm intention to ensure that

a new treaty on strategic arms enters into force at the earliest possible date."

The U.S.-Russian pledge would appear to mean that the two sides would continue to respect the expiring limits on arms and to allow inspectors to continue verifying that both sides are living up to the deal. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said that Obama and Medvedev discussed some of the remaining items to be resolved in a phone call Friday.

"We will continue working through the next 24 hours," Gibbs told reporters, but he said it was unlikely that all the outstanding issues could be resolved in that time.

Gibbs acknowledged European media speculation that Obama will make a side trip to Prague next week to sign a START deal with Medvedev before he goes to Oslo to collect his Nobel Peace Prize on Dec. 10. "We'd have to have an advance team somewhere in Europe

to do that, and we don't have one," Gibbs said.

Negotiators had given up hope months ago of having a new deal ratified and in place before the expiration at midnight Greenwich Mean Time.

Ratification of a new deal by Congress and the Russian Duma is likely to take months. Obama and Medvedev initially had set the expiration date as a target for completing negotiations.

The expiring START treaty, signed by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and President George H.W. Bush, required each country to cut its nuclear warheads by at least one-fourth, to about 6,000, and to implement procedures for verifying that each side was sticking to the agreement.

The legal basis for the procedures, including inspections of nuclear facilities, also will expire Friday. The State Department said this week that it believes

the two sides can keep some of the verification procedures in place through an informal political agreement that is not legally binding.

Negotiators still are grappling over verification procedures for the new treaty, which have become the final sticking point preventing a deal.

The Obama administration would welcome a quick conclusion to demonstrate an improvement in U.S.-Russian relations and to gain momentum for other arms control and nonproliferation goals. Washington also is looking for cooperation on issues including reigning in Iran's nuclear ambitions. However, Russia has fewer incentives for an immediate deal.

Obama and Medvedev agreed at a Moscow summit in July to cut the number of nuclear warheads each possesses to between 1,500 and 1,675 within seven years as part of a broad new treaty. □



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Report details new fumbles in Va. Tech shooting

ZINIE CHEN SAMPSON

Associated Press Writer

RICHMOND, Virginia (AP) — Some Virginia Tech officials warned their own families and the president's office was locked down well before a campus-wide alert was issued in the 2007 slayings of 32 people, according to a revised state report that details new fumbles in the response to the worst mass shooting in U.S. history.

One student survived several hours after being shot without anyone notifying her family until she had died, said the updated report, released Friday.

At least two officials with a crisis response team called their family members after the first shootings at a dorm and about 90 minutes before the all-campus alert was issued

at 9:26 a.m.. The president's office was locked down at 8:52 a.m. and two academic buildings were also shut down before the general alert.

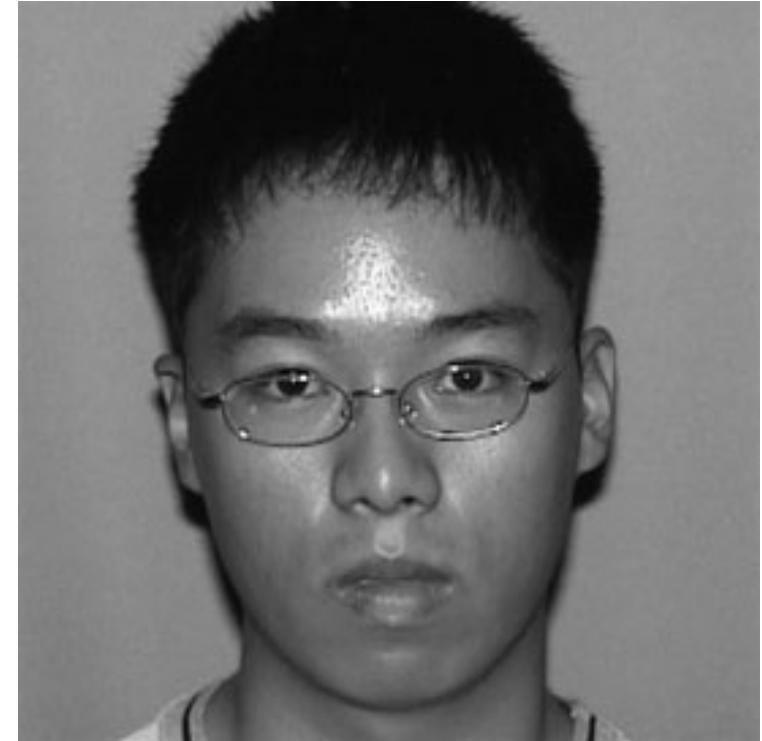
The revisions, made partly in response to requests from victims' families, also added details about troubling behavior by Seung-Hui Cho, and includes information from his mental-health records. Cho, a student from South Korea, killed 32 people and injured several others before killing himself on April 16, 2007, in the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine said the findings that some school officials called their own family members about the initial shootings in a dorm before an all-campus warning was issued were "inexcusable."

"There is almost never a reason not to provide immediate notification," Kaine told the Associated Press Friday. "If university officials thought it was important enough to notify their own families, they should have let everyone know."

While new details were added and other portions were corrected or clarified, the original report's conclusions and recommendations weren't revised. The first document was critical of communications failures, privacy laws and other factors, and issued suggestions on improving campus emergency procedures and notification systems, mental health regulations, and gun purchase reporting requirements.

Kaine agreed to the revision to correct factual errors and



In this undated photo released by the Virginia State Police, Seung-Hui Cho is shown. Seung-Hui, 23, is identified by police as the gunman suspected in the massacre that left 33 people dead at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., Monday, April 16, 2007.

Associated Press

reflect new information that emerged after the panel he appointed to investigate the slayings completed its first document in August 2007. Victims' parents had pressed for corrections, and wanted university officials and others

to be held more accountable for their roles.

Virginia Tech spokesman Mark Owczarski said in a statement Friday that "none of the new information merited changes to any of the recommendations in the original report." q

Swine flu cases less widespread

MIKE STOBBE

AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Swine flu infections continue to wane in the U.S., just as vaccine is becoming plentiful enough that some communities are allowing everyone to get it, not just those in priority groups.

Swine flu was widespread in only 25 U.S. states last week — mostly in the Northeast and Southwest, officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday. In late October, 48 states were reporting widespread cases of swine flu. But since then, there's been a decline across the country, and it appears that a fall wave of swine flu infections has peaked. Meanwhile, a shortage of swine flu vaccine is easing, with 73 million doses now available, roughly twice as much as there was a month ago. And another 10 million doses are expected in the next week, Dr. Thomas Frieden, the CDC's director.

Initially, limited supplies caused the CDC to advise state and local health officials to reserve doses for those at highest risk for severe complications from swine flu or those who take care of them. □

That group includes pregnant women, children and young adults, health-care workers and people with asthma and certain other health problems.

Demand for the vaccine is still high in many places, but enough has become available that some communities are now giving it to people outside the priority groups, Frieden said.

"The number of communities that do that will increase in the coming weeks," he predicted, at a press conference in Atlanta.

At least three states — Alaska, Arkansas and Oklahoma — have begun offering swine flu vaccine to all comers. And some communities have opened vaccinations up, said Paula Steib, spokeswoman for the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Since it was first identified in April, swine flu has sickened an estimated 22 million Americans and killed 4,000. It has proved to be similar to seasonal flu but a bigger threat to children and young adults.

The swine flu pandemic has so far hit in two waves in the United States: First in the spring, then a larger wave that started in the late summer. □

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JOBS PLAN

Continued from Page B1

In a speech from Washington on Tuesday, Obama plans to send Congress a list of ideas he supports for a new jobs bill. He will endorse sending the biggest chunk of fresh money to cash-strapped state and local governments to stem their layoffs and on expanding a program that gives people cash incentives to fix up their homes with energy-saving materials, a senior administration official said. Obama will also endorse new tax breaks for small businesses that hire workers, said the official, who spoke

on condition of anonymity because the package, and Obama's speech, are still being crafted. The president will support some new spending on construction of roads, bridges and other construction, but prefers to see that as a smaller portion of the package because administration economists calculate it doesn't give as quick a boost to job creation as the other measures, the official said.

"We need to grow jobs and get America back to work as quickly as we can," Obama said Friday at an event at Lehigh Carbon Community College in Schnecksville,

Pennsylvania. "On Tuesday, I'm going to speak in greater detail about the ideas I'll be sending to Congress to help jump-start private sector hiring and get Americans back to work."

Job losses in the U.S. have been the worst since the 1930s, but new statistics out Friday showed a relatively moderate shedding of 11,000 jobs last month. The unemployment rate dipped from 10.2 percent in October to 10 percent in November.

The Labor Department report showed November job losses were at the smallest monthly number since the recession began.

"As we come to the end of this very tough year, I want to do something I haven't had a chance to do that often during my first year in office and that is to share some modestly encouraging news on our economy," Obama said before detailing the report.

Channeling a campaign style and an upbeat tone, Obama called it "good news just in time for the season of hope"

and said it is a sign his plans are starting to improve a battered economy.

But, even with the best jobs report the country has had since 2007, Obama said the situation is still dire and in need of urgent attention. Unemployment is expected to remain high for months.

"I still consider one job lost one job too many," he said. "Good trends don't pay the rent."

Making his pitch — and Americans' pain — personal, Obama said his own family had members who were looking for work. The flourish was not included in his prepared remarks.

While the economic crisis began under Obama's predecessor, it now falls to the first-year president to right a sliding economy that has invited political criticism as unemployment stays high. Obama pointed to 700,000 jobs lost each month before he took office in January.

There is growing concern in the White House that unemployment problems could

dwarf all others. Obama hosted a jobs summit at the White House Thursday, scheduled the trip to Pennsylvania for Friday and set the jobs-bill speech for Tuesday.

During a visit Tuesday at Allentown Metal Works, the president adopted a campaign tone, casually chatting with the kind of working-class voters who will be crucial to his plan making its way to Congress and, more daunting, Democrats' chances in the 2010 congressional elections and his own in 2012. Obama has seen his approval rating slide as his promises of change have slammed into governing reality.

The president's motorcade raced past protesters. "Go home," one group chanted. The group also hoisted signs reading "Fail!" and "Republicans work so you don't have to."

In a nod to growing anxiety about federal deficits, Obama is also stressing a need not to increase federal spending too much. During Thursday's jobs discussion with CEOs and academics at the White House, he said it is primarily up to the private sector to create large numbers of new jobs, because "we also, though, have to face the fact that our resources are limited."

The appetite for debt-financed jobs legislation is far higher in Congress, where House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Congress will extend several items in February's \$787 billion economic stimulus measure.

After talks with Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and other administration officials, congressional Democrats are eying up to \$70 billion in unused borrowing authority from last year's \$700 billion Wall Street bailout for jobs-related legislation, House Democratic aides said.

Democrats say the Troubled Assets Relief Program money would pay for any jobs bill. But the move is largely cosmetic since tapping the bailout money would require issuing billions of dollars in new federal debt. The White House had hoped to lower deficit projections by not using the full \$700 billion in TARP authority approved during last year's economic meltdown. □

GOP cautions Obama against climate commitment

By H. JOSEF HEBERT

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Even as he prepares to argue for action at the international climate conference, President Barack Obama is getting some reminders of the domestic political divide — and anxiety — over climate change.

Twenty congressional Republicans, including the top House GOP leadership, sent a letter to the president Friday expressing their "grave concern" that the U.S. delegation might commit to mandatory greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

"Only a treaty ratified by the United States Senate or legislation agreed to by Congress may commit our nation to any mandatory emissions reduction program," wrote the Republican lawmakers.

"Congress has the sole responsibility to approve such a program," they added, asking for clarification "that the U.S. negotiators will not commit our government to an emissions reduction protocol at Copenhagen."

The letter was signed by the two top ranking Republicans in the House, Rep. John Boehner of Ohio and Eric Cantor of Virginia, and 18 other GOP lawmakers including a number of committee chairmen. It reflected their strong opposition to legislation that would reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and industry by 17 percent by 2020.

The House narrowly passed the bill last summer, but it has stalled in the Senate, which is expected to take up climate legislation in the spring.

Obama has said the United States is prepared to commit to reductions in the 17 percent range by 2020 in negotiations at Copenhagen.

But how much of a commitment the Obama administration is prepared to make at Copenhagen has worried some congressional



Arundhati Baden-Mayer Eidinger, 5, of Washington holds up banners calling for actions on climate change, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009, in front of the White House in Washington. The United Nations climate conference that begins Monday in Copenhagen.

Associated Press

Democrats as well.

On Thursday, nine Democratic senators wrote to the president that while they remain committed to tackling climate change, they want assurances that any agreement reached at the conference "is environmentally sound, affordable and fair," and includes "significant commitments and actions by all major emitting countries." "Poorly designed climate policies could jeopardize U.S. national interests by imposing burdens on U.S. consumers, companies and workers without solving the climate challenge," the Democrats cautioned.

The prospects for a tentative agreement at the two-week Copenhagen talks, which are scheduled to conclude Dec. 19, have increased since both China and India announced domestic targets for slowing emission increases as their economies continue to grow quickly. □

Ft. Hood unit deploys despite losing soldiers

ANGELA K. BROWN

Associated Press Writer

FORT HOOD, Texas (AP) — More than 40 Army reservists dedicated to counseling troubled soldiers in war zones deployed to Afghanistan on Friday, a month after a shooting spree at Fort Hood left nearly a fourth of their unit dead or seriously wounded.

The soldiers from the 467th Medical Detachment arrived at a Fort Hood chapel before dawn. Minutes later, led by a deploying soldier carrying the unit's flag, they boarded a bus to the airport. Fort Hood spokesman Mark Kalinoski confirmed that their plane took off for Afghanistan.

The members of the Army Reserve combat stress unit had arrived at the sprawling Texas post only a day before the Nov. 5 rampage. Yet the soldiers said they never wavered in their determination to serve.

They spent the last month training together, and several soldiers from across the country volunteered to fill the void left by the three soldiers



The 467th Medical Detachment based out of Madison, WI loaded up 43 passengers as they headed to the airport for their deployment to Afghanistan at Fort Hood, Texas, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009. Nearly a fourth of the Wisconsin-based 467th Medical Detachment's soldiers died or were injured in the shooting rampage last month at the sprawling Texas post.

Associated Press

killed and six others seriously wounded.

Department of Defense officials decided only recently that the unit would deploy as originally scheduled.

"I think they decided that same day (of the shooting) that they were more dedicated than ever in honor of the soldiers that we lost and have stood firm in that commitment," Maj. Laura Suttinger said late Thursday.

"They were all very dedicated, caring soldiers and they will not be forgotten, and we're carrying on in their honor."

She and another leader in the unit declined to talk about Maj. Nidal Hasan, an Army psychiatrist charged in the shooting spree. Hasan, who was supposed to deploy with the unit, remains in a San Antonio military hospital and is paralyzed from wounds he

suffered in the rampage.

Army officials have not said whether Hasan knew anyone in the unit or if he was targeting them. The shootings occurred in a building full of several hundred soldiers.

Hasan has been charged with 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder. Army officials have not said if they will seek the death penalty, but they plan an evaluation in the next 45 days to determine his mental state that day and whether he is competent to stand trial.

To help in the healing process, the 467th made black bracelets etched with the names of its three slain members — Maj. Libardo Caraveo, Capt. Russell Seager and Sgt. Amy Krueger — as well as the names of two soldiers killed that day from another stress combat unit.

Everyone in the unit will wear them to symbolize that "we are carrying our fallen comrades into combat with us," said 1st Sgt. James McLeod, one of the unit's leaders. □



This undated photo provided by the Indiana State Police shows Andrew Conley of Rising Sun, Ind. Ignoring his younger brother's plea of "Andrew, stop," a 17-year-old who told authorities he identified with a serial killer in a television show strangled the younger boy in cold blood, a prosecutor said Thursday Dec. 3, 2009.

Associated Press

Teen pleads not guilty in killing of brother

DEANNA MARTIN
LISA CORNWELL

Associated Press Writer

RISING SUN, Ind. (AP) — A U.S. teen accused of strangling his 10-year-old brother to satisfy a craving to kill pleaded not guilty to murder Friday, as his parents and relatives attended a viewing of his brother's body a few blocks away.

Andrew Conley, 17, showed no emotion during his initial court appearance in Circuit Court in Indiana.

With about 25 friends — but no immediate family members — looking on, Conley spoke only to tell Judge James Humphrey his name, address and other basic information. He said he had no questions about the murder charge and the possible penalty he faces if convicted.

When Humphrey said the charge carries a sentence of 45 to 65 years in prison, some female friends of Conley started crying.

Conley could face life in prison without parole if the state can prove aggravating circumstances. Dearborn-Ohio County Prosecutor Aaron Negangard has said he does not know if he will seek such a sentence.

During the hearing, Conley's parents and relatives were at a viewing his brother, Conner Conley. □

Colorado State bans guns on campus

KRISTEN WYATT

Associated Press Writer

DENVER (AP) — Colorado State University will join most major colleges nationwide in forbidding concealed weapons on campus after a vote that pitted faculty asking for a ban against students demanding the right to carry guns.

The university's Board of Governors voted 7-0 Friday to require gun bans on its campuses in Fort Collins and Pueblo, instructing the schools to submit a weapons plan by February.

Guns are already off-limits at K-12 schools in Colorado, the University of Colorado and at virtually all campuses nationwide. But Colorado State University has followed state law that allows people to carry guns, even concealed weapons with the right permit.

Both concealed and unconcealed weapons will now be banned.

Officials said the gun ban will leave Utah campuses as the only ones where concealed weapons are allowed. Utah has a law allowing concealed weapons on state property, and a court has ruled there is no exception for colleges.

Colorado State board members acted Friday after a faculty group at the Fort Collins campus asked for a ban.

"Overwhelmingly the faculty feel our campus will be a safer place" with a concealed weapons ban, said Dan Turk, associate professor of computer information systems.

But many students opposed the ban, and the student government at the Fort Collins campus urged the board not to ban guns. Senior Brady Allen, who lawfully carries a weapon on campus, told the board that fear of an accidental discharge from a concealed weapon was a silly reason to ban guns.

"You might as well ban everything that has a potential risk — cars, alcohol and sports," said Allen, a 25-year-old history student and a former Marine.

Almost all college campuses nationwide ban concealed weapons. But gun-rights advocates say the bans make students vulnerable to attack. The question took on greater prominence after a gunman at Virginia Tech killed 32 people and wounded 23 before killing himself in 2007. Since the Virginia Tech massacre, proposals to repeal campus gun bans have been considered in many states, although none has been repealed.

Currently, 26 states ban concealed weapons on any school property. Twenty-three states, including Colorado, allow individual campuses to decide for themselves, though CSU officials say they don't know of any other major schools that allow concealed firearms. □

Aruba TODAY

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U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton arrives at NATO headquarters ahead of a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Friday the allies will prevail in their bid to stabilize Afghanistan but only if America's allies answer U.S. President Barack Obama's call for more allied troops on the ground.

U.S. MARINES

Continued from Page B1

America's European allies will send an estimated 7,000 more troops to Afghanistan next year

Associated Press

"with more to come," NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced Friday.

Most of the new troops are expected to be sent to southern



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PG	OLD DOGS	daily: 12:15	4:15	6:15	8:15	10:15
PG-13	2012	daily: 12:45	4:15	7:45	late show: 11:15	
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G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	daily: 12:15	4:45	2:30	late show:	NEW
PG-13	THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	daily: 12:00	5:30	8:30	late show: 11:30	
R	LAW ABIDING CITIZEN	daily: 12:00	2:45	9:15	late show: 12:00	
PG-13	2012	daily: 1:00	4:30	8:00	late show: 11:15	
PG-13	COUPLES RETREAT	daily: 12:00	7:15	9:45	late show: 12:15	
PG-13	WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE	daily: 12:30	5:00	late show:		
R	PARANORMAL ACTIVITY	daily: 12:15	2:45	9:15	late show: 11:30	
PG	A CHRISTMAS CAROL 3D	daily: 12:15	4:45	7:00	late show: 2:30	



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Afghanistan, including Helmand, where Taliban influence is strongest.

Friday's fighting was taking place in one of the most challenging areas of the country for the U.S.-led NATO force, which has been trying for years to break the Taliban grip there.

Now Zad used to be one of the largest towns in Helmand, the center of Afghanistan's lucrative opium poppy growing industry.

However, three years of fighting have chased away Now Zad's 30,000 inhabitants, leaving the once-thriving market and commercial area a ghost town. Instead the area has become a major supply and transportation hub for Taliban forces that use the valley to move drugs, weapons and fighters south toward major populations and to provinces in western Afghanistan.

British troops who were once stationed there left graffiti dubbing the town "Apocalypse Now-Zad," a play on the title of the 1979 Vietnam War movie "Apocalypse Now."

The British base was nearly overrun on several occasions, with insurgents coming within yards (meters) of the protection wall. The area was handed over in 2008 to the Marines, who have struggled to reclaim much of the valley.

In August, the Marines launched their first large-scale offensive in the barren, wind-swept valley, which is surrounded by steep cliffs with dozens of caves providing cover to Taliban units.

Although only about 100 hardline insurgents are believed to operate in the area, their positions are so strong that a fixed front line runs just a few hundred yards (meters) north of the Marines' base, according to Associated Press reporters who were with the Marines there last summer.

Elsewhere in Helmand, the leader of Britain's opposition Conservative Party warned that NATO had one "last chance" to succeed in Afghanistan and that patience was running out in countries that have provided troops to the NATO-led mission.

"We can't be here for another eight years," David Cameron told the British Broadcasting Corp. after touring a public market in Nad Ali, well south of Friday's fighting. "I think following President Obama's speech and the increase in American and British forces we have a chance, probably our last chance, to get it right, but we do have a chance."

In London, the Sun newspaper said the son of the Helmand governor is seeking asylum in Britain because of fears for his safety.

The newspaper said Barai Mangal, 25, applied for sanctuary in Britain at an immigration office in Liverpool in July. Britain's Home Office declined to discuss the asylum application.

His father, Gov. Gulab Mangal, would not confirm the report but told The Associated Press on Friday that his son was the target of an attempted kidnapping last summer.

"I have an armored car, I have security guards, but my family has no such possibility of security," the governor said. □

Reports: Russian nightclub blast kills 100+

JIM HEINTZ,

Associated Press Writer

MOSCOW (AP) — An explosion apparently caused by pyrotechnics tore through a nightclub in the Russian city of Perm early Saturday, killing more than 100 people, according to emergency officials quoted by state television.

It was not immediately clear if the pyrotechnics were kept in storage at the club or being used as part of a show like in the fire that killed 100 people at a rock club in the U.S. state of Rhode Island in 2003.

Ten people died when a so-called "fire show" went out of control at a Moscow club in March

2007.

In the chaotic aftermath of the blast and subsequent fire, casualty figures differed. State television news channel Vesti cited the Investigative Committee, Russia's top investigative body, as saying the death toll was higher than 100. Reports citing other officials ranged from 86 to more than 90.

Perm, a city of about 1 million people, is about 700 miles east of Moscow in the Ural Mountains. Enforcement of fire safety standards in Russia is notoriously lax and in recent years there have been several catastrophic blazes at drug-treatment facilities and apartment buildings. □

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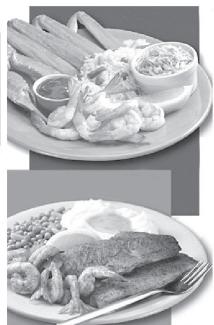
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Cuba-U.S. migration talks pushed back until February

PAUL HAVEN

Associated Press Writer

HAVANA (AP) — Highly anticipated immigration talks between Cuba and the United States have been pushed back because of scheduling concerns that each side blames on the other, another hint that reconciliation may be more difficult than it once appeared.

A U.S. State Department official told The Associated Press on Friday that both sides intend to continue holding periodic negotiations on immigration issues twice a year, but that bureaucratic concerns derailed talks that had been scheduled for early December in Havana.

"At the Cuban government's request, the talks have been rescheduled for February," he said.

A senior Cuban official confirmed that the negotiations had been delayed, but said it was at Washington's bidding — not Cuba's.

"We were ready to hold the talks in December," he said. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the delay publicly.

They agreed that the postponement had nothing to do with politics, but it was another sign of fraying in what months ago seemed like a golden opportunity to end a half-century of discord.

"One does have the impression that things are rather stalled, and the postponement of these talks will add to that impression," said Wayne Smith, a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington and

the former head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, which the U.S. maintains here instead of an embassy. "It's very disappointing."

He blamed officials in Washington for dragging their feet, saying President Barack Obama had taken baby steps and failed to show Havana he was serious about changing U.S. policy.

Last month, the State Department denounced an assault — allegedly by plainclothes state security agents — against Cuba's top dissident blogger, Yoani Sanchez. Obama later sent a lengthy personal message to her, praising her for her work and answering a series of questions she had posed.

This week, prominent American black leaders denounced racism on the island — a particularly touchy subject in Cuba — prompting a blistering response from Cuban artists, writers and intellectuals who said their society is not racist.

Former Cuban President Fidel Castro has used recent essays on world events to lay into Obama for America's policy in Honduras, which he says amounts to support of this summer's military coup there, and in Colombia, where the U.S. recently signed an accord that will allow American soldiers increased access to seven of that country's military bases. Castro said the plan amounted to a military annexation of Colombia by Washington, saying that country was being "devoured by the empire with the same ease with which a lizard swallows a fly."

Last week, Cuba conducted



Surrounded by supporters, Cuba's opposition leader Francisco Chaviano, center, speaks as fellow dissidents Felix Bonne, left, and Gisela Delgado listen during a news conference in Havana, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009. Opposition groups demanded real changes in the island like freedom for political prisoners, the end of repression and the ratification of the international pacts for human rights.

Associated Press

war games against a U.S. invasion, which Cuban military leaders insist is still a real possibility.

Regularly scheduled discussions between the U.S. and Cuba were limited to immigration issues from 1994 until they were canceled under President George W. Bush in 2003. Both sides met to discuss the issue in New York in July and called that session positive.

In September, Cuba and the United States revived talks to restore direct mail service between both countries since Obama took office. Bisa

Williams, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs who traveled to Havana for those discussions, stayed an extra six days and even met with Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Dagoberto Rodriguez, raising hopes for a thaw in relations.

But those hopes have fizzled somewhat. Cuban officials say they have made concrete proposals to the United States to hold talks on counternarcotics, disaster preparedness and other issues — but have not heard back. Washington, in turn, says

Cuba has done little to inspire confidence that it will allow social, political or economic changes — something the U.S. said is a prerequisite to moving forward.

"We are waiting to see what kind of opening they are going to give their own people," a second, more senior State Department official told AP in a recent interview, also on condition of anonymity. "Their own people are asking for it. That would put more wind in our sails, so to speak, and help the dynamic moving forward." □

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Knox convicted, sentenced to 26 years in Italy

ALESSANDRA RIZZO

MARTA FALCONI

Associated Press Writers

PERUGIA, Italy (AP)—A jury in Italy convicted American college student Amanda Knox of murdering her British roommate and sentenced her to 26 years in prison shortly after midnight Saturday.

Her Italian ex-boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito was also convicted and sentenced to 25 years.

As soon as the judge read the verdict after some 13 hours of deliberations, Knox began weeping and murmured, "No, no," then hugged one of her lawyers.

Minutes later, the 22-year-old Knox, who is from Seattle and the 25-year-old Sollecito, were put in police vans with sirens blaring and driven back to jail. Prosecutors had sought life imprisonment, Italy's stiffest sentence. Courts often give less severe punishment than what prosecutors demand.

The American's father, Curt Knox, asked if he would fight on for his daughter, replied, with tears in his eyes: "Hell, yes."

This is just wrong," her stepmother, Cassandra Knox, said, turning around immediately after hearing the verdict. Her family had insisted

she was innocent and a victim of character assassination.

Knox and Sollecito were charged with murder and sexual assault in the slaying of Meredith Kercher more than two years ago. All three were studying in Perugia in Italy's central Umbria region at the time.

Kercher's body was found in a pool of blood with her throat slit on Nov. 2, 2007, in the bedroom of the house she shared with Knox. Prosecutors contend the 21-year-old Leeds University student was murdered the previous night. Knox, who is from Seattle, and Sollecito, had been jailed since shortly after the slaying. The prosecutors contend on the night of the murder, Knox and Sollecito met at the apartment where Kercher and Knox lived. They say a fourth person was there, Rudy Hermann Guede, an Ivory Coast citizen who has been convicted in the murder and sentenced to 30 years in prison. Guede, who is appealing his conviction, says he was in the house the night of the murder but did not kill Kercher.

The prosecution says Knox and Kercher started arguing, and that Knox joined the two men in brutally attacking and sexually assaulting the Briton under "the fumes of drugs and possibly alcohol."

Throughout the trial, prosecutors depicted Knox as a promiscuous and manipulative she-devil whose personality clashed with her roommate's. They say Knox had grown to hate Kercher.

During the trial, the most intimate details of Knox's life were examined, from her lax hygiene — allegedly a point of contention with Kercher — to her sex life, even including a sex toy.

Knox said Kercher was a friend whose slaying shocked and saddened her.

Defense lawyers have described the American, who made the dean's list at the University of Washington, as a smart and cheerful woman, at one point even comparing her to film character Amelie, the innocent and dreamy girl in the 2001 French movie of the same title. □

2009

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Massacre at Pakistan mosque shows Taliban strength

ASIF SHAHZAD

Associated Press Writer

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan (AP) — A Taliban suicide squad targeted Pakistani military officers and their families praying at a mosque Friday close to army headquarters in a gruesome display of the militants' ability to strike at the center of power in this U.S.-allied, nuclear-armed nation.

The barrage of bombs and bullets left 37 people dead, including seven senior officers and 17 children.

The deaths of so many top brass inside a heavily fortified area a few miles from the capital was a major coup for the Pakistani insurgents, who are under pressure as the army pushes an offensive against their stronghold of South Waziristan along the Afghan border.

Friday's carnage also dramatized the risks Pakistan faces if it steps up its support for the United States in the war against Islamic extremists on its side of the border with Afghanistan.

President Barack Obama believes Pakistan is a key partner in that war, but critics contend that Pakistan, hedging its bets in the event the Taliban eventually regain power in Kabul, has held back against Afghan insurgents who use the lawless border region as a safe haven. The attack on the mosque, which was largely reserved for military families, was the latest in a relentless Taliban onslaught against mostly military targets across Pakistan. It came nearly two months after the brazen siege of the army headquarters on Oct. 10, when insurgents held dozens hostage in a

22-hour standoff that left 23 people dead including nine militants.

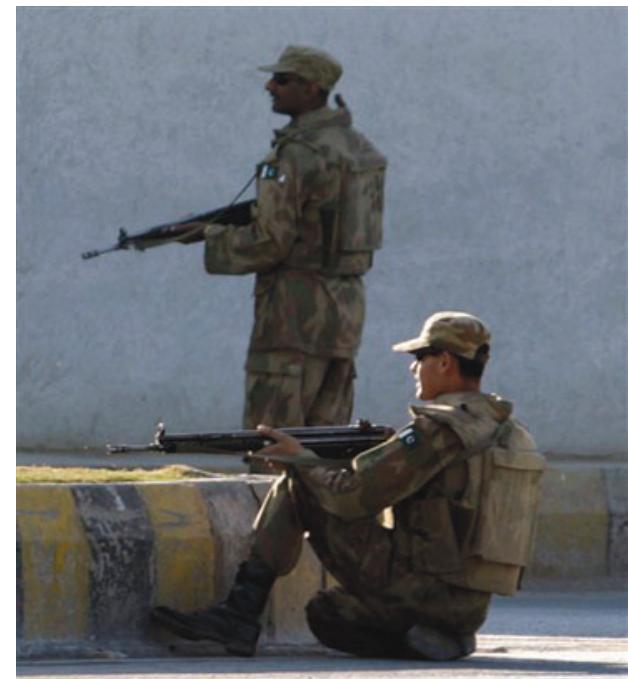
By targeting a packed mosque during Friday prayers, the militants showed they cared little about igniting a possible backlash in this overwhelmingly Muslim country. Authorities urged clerics who had so far avoided publicly criticizing the militants to do so. The attack began shortly after 1:30 p.m. when the assailants lobbed hand grenades to break through a checkpoint close to the mosque, said Yasir Nawaz, a police official at the scene.

Witnesses said two of the militants then stormed the mosque, while others ran into buildings nearby. They wore suicide belts under traditional baggy Pakistani clothes, lobbed grenades and sprayed automatic weapons at worshippers.

"They were killing people like animals," witness Nasir Ali Sheikh. "Whoever they saw they shot at. They were well trained and moved very quick."

At least four attackers took part in the attack, which left the walls of the mosque smeared with blood and victims lying on abandoned prayer mats. Security forces exchanged fire with the assailants for an hour, killing them or watching them blow themselves up. Reporters were prevented from getting close as helicopters hovered overhead and trucks carrying commando teams and ambulances raced to the scene.

The dead in Friday's attack included a major general, a brigadier, a colonel, two lieutenant colonels, one major and a retired major as well as three regular



Pakistan's Army troops take positions near the site of a suicide attack in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on Friday, Dec. 4, 2009. At least two militants stormed a mosque close to Pakistan's army headquarters during Friday prayers, firing and throwing grenades before blowing themselves up in an attack that killed tens of people, officials said.

Associated Press

soldiers, military spokesman Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas said. Seventeen children — 11 of them army kids — and 10 civilians also were killed. □



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SPORTS**Aruba TODAY****NHL Roundup****Crosby alight as Pens down Avalanche 4-1**

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Sidney Crosby had two goals and an assist for Pittsburgh in a 4-1 win over the Colorado Avalanche on Thursday, as the Penguins retained a share of the NHL Eastern Conference lead.

Crosby scored in the first period, added an empty-net goal, and assisted on Bill Guerin's tally to give him 11 points in three games.

Pittsburgh has won six of seven and five straight at home.

T.J. Galiardi scored for Colorado, which has only one win in its past six.

Coyotes 2, Flames 1

In Glendale, Arizona, Taylor Pyatt scored with 3:29 remaining to lift Phoenix past Calgary.

Petr Prucha also scored for the Coyotes, who won their third straight.

David Moss had the lone goal for Calgary, which lost on the road in regulation for the first time since Oct. 13.

Blues 3, Sharks 2, SO

In San Jose, California, T.J. Oshie and Andy McDonald scored in the shootout to lift St. Louis over San Jose.

St. Louis' Carlo Colaiacovo scored a short-handed goal with 7 seconds remaining to tie it 2-2 and force overtime.

Patrick Marleau netted a goal in the shootout for the Sharks, who had a three-game winning streak stopped. Dany Heatley and Joe Pavelski scored in regulation.

Jay McClement had the other regulation goal for the Blues.

Capitals 6, Panthers 2

In Washington, Alexander Semin had two goals and two assists in his return from a wrist injury as Washington breezed past Florida.

The Capitals hardly missed the suspended Alex Ovechkin, and notched a fourth straight victory. Washington is 5-1-1 without Ovechkin this season.

Brendan Morrison had a goal and two assists, and Tomas Fleischmann, Matt Bradley and Nicklas Backstrom also scored for Washington, 3-0 against the Panthers this season.

Stephen Weiss and Bryan Allen scored for Florida, which has lost six of seven.

Kings 6, Senators 3

In Los Angeles, Drew Doughty netted the tiebreaking goal and Wayne Simmonds scored a penalty as Los Angeles beat Ottawa.

After Doughty's goal in the second period, Justin Williams added two insurance goals in the final 2:33.



Pittsburgh Penguins' Sidney Crosby waits to take a face off against the Colorado Avalanche in the second period of an NHL hockey game in Pittsburgh, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009.

Associated Press

Randy Jones and Brad Richardson also scored for Los Angeles.

Mike Fisher had two goals for the Senators, who have lost the first three games on a five-game West Coast trip. Jonathan Cheechoo also scored for Ottawa.

Islanders 4, Thrashers 1

In Atlanta, Matt Moulson scored a hat trick as New York snapped Atlanta's four-game winning streak. It was the first career hat trick for Moulson, who is in his third season in the NHL. Rookie forward John Tavares scored into an empty net with 1 second remaining.

Moulson, who has a team-leading 14 goals and is tied with Tavares with a club-best 22 points, completed his hat trick at 13:09 of the third period.

The Thrashers took a 1-0 lead via Slava Kozlov in the first period.

Sabres 6, Canadiens 2

In Buffalo, New York, Clarke MacArthur, Jason Pominville and Derek Roy scored first-period goals, setting up Buffalo's comfortable win over Montreal.

Ryan Miller made 21 saves for the Sabres, who notched a fourth straight win while inflicting a fourth successive defeat upon the Canadiens, who will celebrate their 100th anniversary on Friday. □



FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke holds up the name South Africa as Actress Charlize Theron reacts during the 2010 World Cup draw in Cape Town, South Africa, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009.

Associated Press

Tough World Cup group for Brazil, easy for Spain**ROBERT MILLWARD****AP Football Writer**

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Five-time winner Brazil was stung by a tough draw for the 2010 World Cup on Friday while co-favorite Spain was given an easy ride through to the second round.

Brazil has to face two of the teams from the top 16 in FIFA's rankings — Portugal and Ivory Coast. Also in the group is North Korea, an unknown quantity.

"Having a difficult group like this is good because we'll be focused," Brazil coach Dunga said. "They won't be easy games. The group is undoubtedly balanced, but we're confident in our play. "We'll have to maintain the good play we've had of late — and work even harder. Every time Brazil takes the field, we're expected to win. The pressure will be tough."

European champion Spain, which has never won the World Cup, should easily make it through to the knockout phase, facing lower ranked Switzerland, Honduras and Chile and avoiding the tough opponents in the 32-team draw.

Coach Vicente Del Bosque is taking nothing for granted.

"Let's not underestimate the three opponents we're facing," he said. "Every one has their difficulty. We already knew that we were going to be mentioned as the group favorites, but that's something you have to prove on the pitch."

Del Bosque wasn't interesting in talking about a possible second-round meeting with Brazil or Portugal.

"That's way ahead," he said. "First we have to get through the first round." After qualifying via the playoffs thanks in part to Thierry Henry's handball against Ireland, France faces host South Africa with Mexico and Uruguay in Group A and has an easy task to get to the second round.

"I'm not relieved. We have been drawn in the host country's group and it's never easy," said France coach Raymond Domenech, who has come under fire for the team's poor form for two years.

Continued on Page B12

NFL Roundup

Jets overcome injury to Sanchez to beat Bills 19-13

By JOHN WAWROW

AP Sports Writer

TORONTO — Matching braces — one for the right knee to go with the one Mark Sanchez already has on his left — might just remind the New York Jets rookie quarterback how necessary it is to slide.

Rex Ryan certainly hopes so. The Jets coach was visibly upset following a 19-13 win over the Buffalo Bills on Thursday night, when he watched Sanchez hobble off with a knee injury for the second time in five days. "Sometimes, the kid's got to understand we're trying to teach him to slide," said Ryan. "I love the kid, but he's got to grow up and understand he represents

our entire organization. We want what's best for him."

Sanchez sprained his right knee when he dived headfirst on an 8-yard scamper up the middle to pick up a first down on the Jets' second possession of the third quarter. And it happened in the same week in which the Jets brought in Yankees manager Joe Girardi to provide the first-round draft pick sliding lessons after Sanchez hurt his left knee in a 17-6 win against Carolina on Sunday.

This time, however, Sanchez did not return after being taken to the locker room.

Though Ryan said he's optimistic Sanchez will be able to play at Tampa Bay on Dec.

13, he added that further tests are required.

At least the Jets' bid to make a late-season playoff push is back on better footing after a second straight win evened their record at 6-6.

Sanchez hit Braylon Edwards for a go-ahead 13-yard touchdown late in the first half. Thomas Jones had 109 yards rushing to lead a Jets' ground attack that registered 249 yards, while Jay Feely hit four field goals.

New York's defense did the rest, limiting Buffalo to 36 yards and four first downs in the second half to spoil Buffalo's second annual home game in Toronto. And in a game billed as "T.O. in T.O.," Jets cornerback Darrelle



New York Jets quarterback Mark Sanchez (6) is sacked by Buffalo Bills defensive tackle Kyle Williams in the first quarter of an NFL football game in Toronto, on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009.

Associated Press

in Canada's largest city and financial capital.

They opened the series with a 16-3 loss to Miami last year.

"Well, I'm hoping it was fun and exciting for the fans," Owens said. "Definitely, we wanted to put some points on the board and obviously we wanted to come out here and get a win. But that obviously didn't happen."

The Bills made a game of it for one half at least after Marshawn Lynch scored on a 15-yard run to put Buffalo up 10-6. The second half was an altogether different story, as the Bills' young and banged-up offensive line — which lost right tackle Kirk Chambers to an ankle injury — couldn't protect Fitzpatrick. □



Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade, right, is fouled while shooting by Denver Nuggets forward Carmelo Anthony in the first quarter of an NBA basketball game in Denver on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009.

Associated Press

NBA Roundup

Celtics make it six straight, down Spurs

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The Boston Celtics won their sixth straight NBA game with a 90-83 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Thursday.

Kevin Garnett scored 20 points and Ray Allen added 15 as the Celtics improved to an NBA-best 8-1 away from home and moved back into a share of the Eastern Conference lead with Orlando.

San Antonio also had won five in a row coming in, but the Celtics ran away with what Spurs coach Gregg Popovich acknowledged was a litmus test. Of the nine teams San Antonio has beaten this season, only four had winning records.

Spurs rookie DeJuan Blair had a career-high 18 points and 11 rebounds.

Nuggets 114, Heat 96

In Denver, Carmelo Anthony scored 22 points to help Denver rout Miami.

The defeat meant Heat star Dwyane Wade's woeful record in Denver was extended to 0-6 in his seven NBA seasons.

Wade, who snapped an 0-11 skid at Indiana this season, had 25 points.

Rockets 111, Warriors 109

In Oakland, California, Aaron Brooks hit two free throws with 2 seconds left as Houston edged Golden State.

Brooks finished with 25 points to lead seven Houston players in double figures.

Monta Ellis had 24 points, eight assists and six rebounds for Golden State, who welcomed back coach Don Nelson after he missed five games because of pneumonia. □

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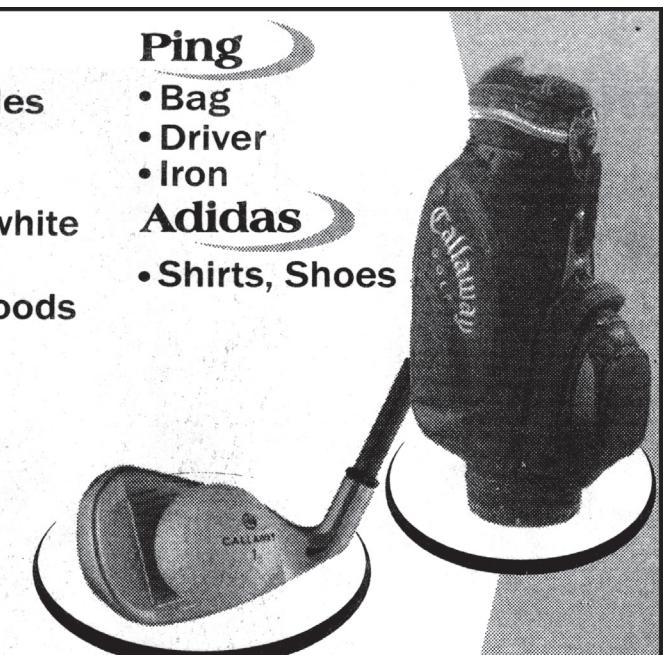
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FIFA President Sepp Blatter holds aloft the trophy watched by South African president Jacob Zuma during the 2010 World Cup draw in Cape Town, South Africa, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009.

Associated Press

WORLD CUP*Continued from Page B10*

"We know how important it is to host in World Cup matches. It will be an away game (against South Africa)."

South Africa will face Mexico

in the opening game on June 11 at Soccer City, one of six new or rebuilt stadiums at the tournament. Soccer City will also host the final on July 11.

England was drawn to face the United States, Algeria and Slovenia, which won a playoff to reach the competition, in

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Group C. England midfielder David Beckham, who took part in Friday's draw, is set to face many of the Americans he regularly plays alongside and against in Major League Soccer in Rustenburg on June 12.

England and the United States have met only once before in the World Cup, with the Americans stunning their star-studded opponents 1-0 in a group game at the 1950 tournament.

"I think it will be not an easy game," England coach Fabio Capello said.

"It's good. USA plays good and the Premier League is the best championship in the world. If you are playing in England, you are a really good player. Like basketball, if you are a European playing in the NBA, you are a good player." Germany, which has won the title three times, faces a tough group against Australia, Serbia and Ghana, but has not lost a World Cup group game since a 2-0 defeat to Denmark in 1986.

"It's important to win the opening game (against Australia in Durban on June 13) and get the necessary confidence for the next two matches," Germany coach Joachim Loew said.

"The game against Australia will be very important. We already played them in an opening game, at the Confederations Cup (in 2005), and we won 4-3, with a lot of difficulty.

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Ghana coach Milan Rajevac rued getting a tough group but was hopeful of advancing.

"It was not a lucky day for Ghana," Rajevac said. "But I think we can reach the second round."

Defending champion Italy, which is chasing its fifth World Cup title, should be confident of reaching the next stage after drawing New Zealand, Paraguay and Slovakia.

But coach Marcello Lippi, who returned to lead the side after guiding it to a fourth World Cup title in Germany in 2006, feared facing European champion Spain in the last eight.

"We could face a very tough opponent in the quarterfinals, if we get there," Lippi said. "Being satisfied doesn't mean we consider it an easy group. You've got to go game by game."

The Netherlands, which won all its qualifying games, faces Japan, Cameroon and Denmark.

The Dutch have reached the final twice and should prove strong enough to make it through to the second round. Argentina, which only just made it after winning its final two qualifying games under coach Diego Maradona, must play Nigeria, South Korea and Greece, the Euro 2004 champion.

That is one of the tough groups and the pressure will be on Maradona, whose team struggled throughout the qualifying rounds, to get the best out of talented players such as Lionel Messi, Carlos Tevez and Sergio Aguero.

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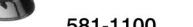
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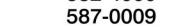
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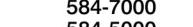
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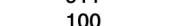
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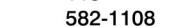
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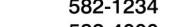
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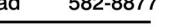
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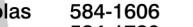
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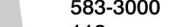
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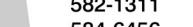
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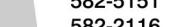
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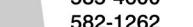
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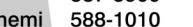
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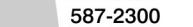
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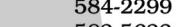
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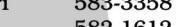
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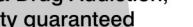
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Gobierno interviene tres bancos en Venezuela

CARACAS (AP) - El ministro de Economía Ali Rodríguez anunció el viernes la intervención a "puertas cerradas" de Central Banco Universal, Baninvest y Banco Real, luego de determinar que violentaron las normas del sistema.

La decisión contra estas tres instituciones se da cuatro días después que el gobierno acordó el cierre de los bancos Canarias, Confederado, Bolívar y ProVivivenda(BanPro), tras un proceso de intervención de diez días.

Rodríguez dijo a la televisora estatal que el gobierno acordó la intervención de las tres entidades bancarias luego que las autoridades determinaron que "violentaron las normas que están obligados a cumplir".



Una empleada del Banco Canarias protesta frente a tropas de la Guardia Nacional para exigir su pago de indemnización, en Caracas, el viernes 4 de diciembre del 2009. (AP Foto/Ariana Cubillos)

El propósito del gobierno es "rehabilitar estos bancos", señaló. "El análisis realizado en los mismos arroja la posibilidad de rehabilitarlos a fin de restablecer la normalidad de las operaciones, garantizar tanto los derechos de los depositantes, de los acreedores, de los trabajadores y por supuesto

también del Estado, y la sanidad, la salud de todo el sistema".

Descartó que los procesos emprendidos contra las siete instituciones, que manejaban cerca del 8% del negocio bancario, representen una crisis generalizada del sistema. Agregó que esperan que no sea necesario hacer nuevos anuncios de esta naturaleza.

Los procesos emprendidos contra un grupo de bancos han generado inquietud en el mercado financiero local y retiros masivos de depósitos en algunas entidades. Esta situación ha obligado a ciertas instituciones a recurrir a préstamos entre bancos para atender sus deficiencias de liquidez. □

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